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ENG 5011-001: Studies in Composition and Rhetoric: Practice and Politics of Evaluating Student Writing

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English 5011 – Studies in Composition and Rhetoric: The Practice and Politics of Evaluating Student Writing

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Objectives and Overview

For most writing teachers, evaluating students' writing takes the majority of the time we spend on our courses and represents a significant amount of the one-on-one communication we have with our students. Despite the amount of time spent grading, teachers often don't take time to critically analyze their approaches to evaluation or to plan an effective method for handling a stack of papers. This course will examine evaluation broadly, from establishing evaluation criteria for assignments to giving feedback on drafts to assigning a final grade on the paper.

Specific objectives for this course:

- Develop an in-depth understanding of the literature on evaluating student writing
- Recognize and apply effective methods of evaluation that support student learning and align with course objectives, assignment objectives, and classroom content
- Develop strategies for maintaining the effectiveness of evaluation while improving efficiency
- Demonstrate the ability to engage effectively with composition research and theory
- Demonstrate the ability to write professional, clear academic prose that engages effectively with source material while presenting original ideas

Texts for this Class

- *Key Works in Teacher Response: An Anthology*, Richard Straub
- *Evaluating Writing: The Role of Teachers' Knowledge about Text, Learning, and Culture*, Charles Cooper and Lee Odell
- Articles on e-reserve

Assignments

Article Responses:

Eight times during the semester, you will select an important issue from the readings and briefly summarize how that issue is discussed in the articles you have read for that week. You will then write an analysis by doing one or more of the following:

- Take a position in support of or opposition to the arguments presented in the articles
- Compare/contrast the relative strengths and weaknesses among the three articles' presentations of that issue (i.e., which is more credible, reliable, persuasive on this issue?)
- Discuss the issue in terms of concepts or articles from earlier in the course
- Apply the issue to your own experiences evaluating or being evaluated

Article responses will be evaluated on evidence of accuracy of reading, depth of engagement with the articles, critical thinking, and clarity of prose. Length is not a focus of the evaluation.

Note: There are 11 dates (between weeks 2–12) on the syllabus with the assignment indicator “article response.” You may choose the 8 responses you will write from this list of dates. If you choose to write more than 8 responses, you may drop the lowest article response scores at the end of the semester.

Evaluation Rubrics:

You will design and apply rubrics for two assignments. Along with the rubrics, you will provide a written rationale for the decisions you have made. The rubrics and rationale will be evaluated on grounding in literature about evaluation, connection between the assignment sheet and rubric, usability of the rubric, appropriateness for the target student population, and clarity and correctness of prose.

Evaluation Philosophy and Plan:

At the end of the semester, you will write your evaluation philosophy (your beliefs about what makes effective evaluation) and plan (how you will approach evaluation on a practical level). The evaluation philosophy and plan will be evaluated on its grounding in the literature about evaluation, self-reflection, and clarity of prose.

Assigned Evaluating:

As part of this class, you will have the opportunity to evaluate sample papers. A LOT of sample papers. Failure to evaluate the assigned papers will result in a reduction of your semester grade, but the evaluations you write will not be graded; instead I will provide you with feedback on your evaluative approaches.

Major Paper/Project:

You will write a paper on some aspect of evaluation of interest to you. The project can be based in research of secondary sources, interviews with teachers or students, analysis of evaluated papers, etc. The topic and scope are at your discretion; you will, however, submit an informal 2–5 page proposal midway through the semester. Specific evaluation criteria for the major paper and project will be provided after the proposal stage.

Grades:

Assignment	% grade
Article Responses/Discussions	30
Evaluation rubrics	15
Evaluation Philosophy	20
Major Paper/Project	35

Attendance, Participation, and Late Work

Prompt, regular attendance, as well as active participation in class discussion and activities, is expected. Students who do not attend regularly or who do not participate in class discussions and activities can expect that their final grade will be lowered.

Late assignments will be docked 5% each day until they are turned in. All major assignments must be turned in to pass the course.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Plagiarism

Since this is a class on evaluating student writing, we'll have opportunities to discuss how you might handle student work that has been plagiarized or that you suspect might have been plagiarized. It should go without saying (but unfortunately, these things usually don't) that we will model the behaviors of academic integrity that we would expect from our students.

To that end, plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. The English Department states, "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism -- 'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' -- has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of "F" in the course."

ENG 5011: Assigned Work

Work should be completed by the start of class time on the date indicated.

C/O = Cooper and Odell, *Evaluating Writing*

S = Straub, *Key Works on Teacher Response*

E = E-reserves for ENG 5011 (password tf5011)

Jan 13	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Odell, "Assessing Thinking: Glimpsing a Mind at Work" (C/O)• Cooper, "What We Know about Genres and How It Can Help Us Assign and Evaluate Writing" (C/O)• Ryder, Vander Lei, and Roen, "Audience Considerations for Evaluating Writing" (C/O) <p>WRITE:</p> <p>Article response</p> <p>BRING:</p> <p>Course materials binder</p> <p>Assignment sheets you've created in the past</p>
Jan 20	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sommers, N., "Responding to Student Writing" (S)• Sommers, N., "Re-visions: Rethinking Nancy Sommers's 'Responding to Student Writing,' 1982" (E)• Horvath, Components of Written Response: A Practical Synthesis of Current Views" (E) <p>WRITE:</p> <p>Article response</p>
Jan 27	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smith, "Genre of the End Comment: Conventions in Teacher Response to Student Writing" (E)• Ransdell, "Directive versus Facilitative Commentary" (E)• Auten, "A Rhetoric of Teacher Commentary: The Complexity of Response to Student Writing" (E)• Connors & Lunsford, "Teachers' Rhetorical Comments on Student Papers" (S)• Voss & Keane, "Grading" (E) <p>WRITE:</p> <p>Article response</p>

Feb 3	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Odell, "Responding to Responses: Good News, Bad News, and Unanswered Questions" (E) • Zak, "Exclusively Positive Responses to Student Writing" (E) • Diederich, "In Praise of Praise" (S) • Gee, "Students' Responses to Teacher Comments" (S) <p>WRITE: Article response</p>
Feb 10	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haswell, "Minimal Marking" (E) • Anson, "Response and the Social Construction of Error" (E) • Strong, "Coaching Writing Development: Syntax Revisited" (C/O) • Kolln, "Cohesion and Coherence" (C/O) <p>WRITE: Article response</p>
Feb 17	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straub, "Students' Reactions to Teacher Comments: An Exploratory Study" (E) • O'Neill & Fife, "Listening to Students: Contextualizing Response to Student Writing" (S) • Sperling & Freeman, "A Good Girl Writes Like a Good Girl: Written Response to Student Writing" (S) • Ziv, "The Effect of Teacher Comments on the Writing of Four College Freshmen" (S) <p>WRITE: Article response Two assignment rubrics and rationale</p>
Feb 24	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sommers, J, "Enlisting Writer's Participation in the Evaluation Process" (S) • Straub, "Teacher Response as Conversation: More than Casual Talk" (S) • Knoblauch & Brannon, "Teacher Commentary on Student Writing: The State of the Art" (S) <p>WRITE: Article response; bring this week's response to class electronically</p>

Mar 3	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ferris, "One Size Does Not Fit All: Response and Revision Issues for Immigrant Student Writers" (E) Ball, "Evaluating the Writing of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: The Case of the AAVE Speaker" (C/O) Valdes & Sanders, "Latino ESL Students and the Development of Writing Abilities" (C/O) Cai, "Texts in Contexts: Understanding Chinese Students' English Compositions" (C/O) <p>WRITE:</p> <p>Article response</p> <p>Two assignment rubrics and rationale (revised)</p> <p>GRADE:</p> <p>Assigned papers</p>
Mar 10	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Murphy, "Assessing Portfolios" (C/O) Hillocks, "The Interaction of Instruction, Teacher Comment, and Revision in Teaching the Composing Process" (S) Beach, "Evaluating Writing to Learn: Responding to Journals" (E) <p>WRITE:</p> <p>Article response</p> <p>2–5 page final project proposal</p>
Mar 24	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bloom, "Why I (Used to) Hate to Give Grades" (E) Elbow, "Ranking, Evaluating, and Liking: Sorting out Three Forms of Judgment" (E) Sommers, J, "A Comprehensive Plan to Respond to Student Writing" (E) <p>WRITE:</p> <p>Article response</p>
Mar 31	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tobin, "Reading Students, Reading Ourselves" (E) Schwegler, "The Politics of Reading Student Papers" (E) Anson, "Reflective Reading: Developing Thoughtful Ways to Respond to Students' Writing (S) Rubin, "Gender Patterns: Reading Student Texts"

	<p>WRITE: Article response</p>
Apr 7	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miller, "Fault Lines in the Contact Zone" (E) • Bloom, "Freshman Composition as a Middle-Class Enterprise" (E) <p>WRITE: Article response A philosophy and plan of evaluation</p> <p>GRADE: Assigned papers</p>
Apr 14	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haswell, "Complexities of Responding to Student Writing; or, Looking for Shortcuts via the Road of Excess...." (E) • Hairston, "On Not Being a Composition Slave" (E) <p>GRADE: Full set of class papers</p>
Apr 21	<p>Panel discussion with experienced writing instructors</p>
Apr 28	<p>WRITE: Final paper</p> <p>INFORMALLY PRESENT: 10-minute version of your paper.</p>